# Dragonshards
# And So It Begins…
### By Keith Baker

*The hall was filled with armored bones. Pierce had struck down five Karrnathi skeletons in as many minutes but there seemed to be an endless supply of the undead soldiers. Glancing down, Daine saw the source of their troubles. The shattered bones were creeping and rolling across the floor, knitting together to form new warriors. It could only be the work of the machine. "Lei!" he cried. "We're running out of time!"*

*The artificer paid no attention. Her eyes were focused on the eldritch machine before her. She could feel negative energy rising from the tangled mass of black steel, as the power of the Endless Night slowly filled the Khyber dragonshards. She had to detach the crystals from the sinister artifact but could she do it without releasing a lethal burst of dark power?*

*Across the chamber, the barred gate flew open. The necromancer strode into the chamber, her gilded deathmask glittering in the light of the everburning torches. Even as Daine turned to face the new threat, a knot of armored zombies flooded in behind her. "It's already too late," she said, her voice a throaty rasp. "The age of death has begun!"*

By now, the **Eberron** Campaign Setting has found its way onto bookshelves around the world. This book provides you with all of the information you need to run or take part in an **Eberron** campaign. Sadly, there's a limit to how much information can be squeezed into 320 pages, and that's where *Dragonshards* comes in. Each week, we'll explore a different aspect of Eberron and how it can affect your campaign. To begin with, we're going to cover broad topics: the Last War, religion, dragonmark houses, use of magic, and the overall tone of the setting. Beyond that we'll get more specific, looking at individual organizations, deities, places, races, customs, and history. If there something you'd like to see, post your request on the **Eberron** message board!

To have a campaign, you need to have characters. To kick things off, let's look at creating characters in Eberron.

## What Makes a Hero?

One of the fundamental ideas of the **Eberron** Campaign Setting is that the player characters are remarkable people. You have a potential that most people simply cannot match -- except, of course, for the worst villains of the world, which is why heroes are needed in the first place.

Unless yours is a high-powered campaign, characters start out at 1st level. Many of the greatest characters of film, literature, and myth have humble beginnings. The key to being fully prepared for the colorful future that lies ahead is to develop your character from the beginning with the future in mind. If your game was a story, why would people want to read about you? What makes you an interesting character? What hints at your hidden potential? Consider the following.

**Alignment**

In Eberron, alignment is not black and white. It's important to remember that the *Player's Handbook* describes alignment as "a tool... not a straitjacket" and emphasizes that behavior can vary from day to day. Alignment provides insight into how you see the world. Are you a true hero, a cynic who's just trying to get through the day, or a power-hungry manipulator with pawns instead of friends?

When building your character, alignment is a key decision, not an afterthought; decide *why* the character is that way. Perhaps he began as an idealistic, lawful good follower of the Church of the Silver Flame but after witnessing or participating in unspeakable horrors in the Last War, he was beaten down into cynical neutrality. Maybe she began as a neutral evil member of a powerful criminal guild in Sharn but the tragic death of a friend caused her to reverse her outlook on life and seek redemption.

Our experiences and environment often shape our outlook on the world. What caused you to be the way you are today? The more thought you put into this, the better prepared you'll be when it's time to decide between toeing the line of alignment or stepping across it.

## Region of Origin

Every nation of Eberron has a story, and you should think about your character's homeland and the impact it's had on him. The nation of Cyre was destroyed during the Last War. How would this affect a native of Cyre? Is she still searching for friends and family or has she given them up for dead? Is there an heirloom lost in the Mournland that the character has sworn to recover? What about the people trying to rebuild Cyran communities, such as Desolate and New Cyre? Does your character support these refugees and undertake adventures on their behalf, or has he cast aside that part of his past?

Each nation has a similar set of questions. If a character grew up in the Eldeen Reaches, did she fight the forces of Aundair or support the kingdom against the rebels of the Reaches? An elf character might be a Valenar warrior, an Aereni mystic, or an expatriate who has adopted the culture of one of the other nations of Khorvaire.

There's a lot to think about when choosing a homeland. Study the regions and think about how they can intertwine with the story you want your character to weave.

## Religion

Religion will be examined in more detail in the future but your character's faith needs to be considered from the very beginning. What impact has religion had on his life?

If he follows the Sovereign Host, has he chosen a particular sovereign as his personal patron? Does he believe that the sovereigns have directly touched his life? Does he carry a token of one or more of the deities, or stop by a shrine when he arrives at a new city?

The Silver Flame advocates the destruction of physical, supernatural, and spiritual evil. If your character follows the Flame, how faithful is she to its ideals? Is she a zealot constantly striving to improve the world, and if so, does she use a sword or words? Is she a believer in name only, hoping to use the resources of the church for personal gain?

Perhaps your character doesn't follow any religion. If so, what does that mean? Was his belief shattered by a tragic experience? Does he believe that faith is a fool's game, and divine magic comes from a secular source?

In addition to the impact of personal faith, consider the dealings a character has had with other religions. A follower of the Silver Flame might have clashed with the Blood of Vol or the Cults of the Dragon Below.

## Signs and Portents

A mysterious past is a tried and true way to spice up a character. Perhaps she has a birthmark in the shape of a sword or an unusual planar conjunction occurred at the moment of her birth. Perhaps she was left at the doorstep of a temple and knows nothing of her true parents. You don't need to decide what the mystery means at the beginning of the game. On the contrary, the goal is to give the Dungeon Master a tool for fashioning future stories. The outcome can be as much of a surprise to the player as the character. Eberron allows the potential for characters to reach epic levels and become the most powerful figures in the world; leaving open-ended mysteries in their past can help explain this potential. Don't be afraid of being melodramatic; melodrama plays well in a setting like **Eberron**.

These are only a few of the things to consider during character design. Other important questions include the effect that the Last War had on your character and, most importantly, what binds your fellow adventurers Together. Review the "Creating a Party" section in Chapter Nine of the **Eberron** Campaign Setting for more ideas on this subject. Along with your companions, you're writing a story: make it interesting from the very beginning!

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